

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Legislature Collecting Data on
County Involuntary Commitment Costs for Mentally Ill**

HELENA - The Law and Justice Interim Committee of the state legislature wants to know how much counties are spending for the detention, mental health evaluation, treatment, and transportation of mentally ill individuals who are a danger to themselves or others and who may need to be involuntarily committed to the Montana State Hospital. The cost data will help the Committee decide whether legislation is needed to revise county responsibilities for these precommitment expenses. To gather this information, the Committee developed a survey, which the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) is sending to each county attorney's office. This survey, developed as part of the HJR 50 study requested by the 2007 Legislature, also asks counties to comment on whether and how the current law should be changed with respect to the precommitment process and the payment of costs. The survey is being sent electronically to each county attorney and has been posted on the MACo website <http://maco.cog.mt.us/> as well as to the Committee website, which is accessible from the legislative branch home page at <http://leg.mt.gov>. County attorneys are being asked to ensure that this survey is completed promptly and accurately and returned to Sheryl Wood, Associate Director of MACo, by no later than March 3, 2008. The data and information will be compiled, analyzed, and reported to the Law and Justice Interim Committee in time for its April 10-11, 2008, meeting in Helena and will be instrumental in formulating legislative policy in this area. For further information about the HJR 50 precommitment costs survey, please contact Sheryl Wood, MACo, 444-4393, swood@maco.cog.mt.us, or Sheri Heffelfinger, Legislative Services, 444-3596, sheffelfinger@mt.gov.